

IMPACT



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10¢

SHOCK

SUSPENSTORIES

JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION

IN THE



TRADITION!



WELLS

IN THIS ISSUE:
E.C.'S ADAPTATION OF A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!

RAY BRADBURY



Ray Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Ill., on Aug. 22, 1920. His mother was of Swedish descent, and his father's ancestors came to America in 1630. Ray spent much of his childhood in Arizona. At the age of 12, he received his first typewriter, a toy model, and started to write sequels to Edgar Rice Burroughs novels. As a boy, his greatest interests were magic, acting, and reading the Oz books, Tom Swift, Edgar Allan Poe, and Jules Verne. So it was quite natural, when he began writing, that his first stories were fantasies. He took a short-story course in Los Angeles High School in 1937, graduated in 1938, and had no further formal education. He started submitting stories to magazines at the age of 15, and sold his first story at the age of 21. His early acceptances appeared in the leading pulp magazines. Then in 1945, he sold his first "quality" story to the American Mercury, and followed this with sales to most of America's best-known slick magazines. His stories have been reprinted in some 60 anthologies, including the 1946, 1948, and 1952 volumes of The Best American Short Stories. In 1948, Ray won third prize in the O. Henry Memorial Prize Stories Awards. The only other job Bradbury has ever held outside of writing was during the three years from 1939 to 1942, when he sold newspapers on a street corner at night, while writing during the day. He has had three books of stories published: DARK CARNIVAL, from Arkham House in 1947; THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, from Doubleday in 1950; and THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, Doubleday, 1951. His new book of stories, THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN, is due, again from Doubleday, about the time this brings him the sounds Ray has just finished writing a science-fiction movie script for a big Hollywood film studio, and has started another. He now lives in Los Angeles with his wife Marguerite, whom he married in 1947, and his two daughters . . . Susan, age three, and Ramona, eighteen months. Having been a fervent collector of comic strips and panels since the age of eight (owning a complete file of Buck Rogers strips from 1928 through 1937, Flash Gordon from 1934 through 1938, Prince Valiant from 1937 through the present, and Tarzan (drawn by Hal Foster) from 1932 through 1936, plus hundreds of old Popeyes, Our Our Ways, Alley Oops, etc.), Ray was most enthusiastic when we suggested adapting some of his stories into the comic format. His reaction to the job EC is doing can best be summed up in his own words: ". . . My thanks and gratitude for the really fine adaptations and beautiful art work you are doing on my stories. This is an entirely new experience to me, and I cannot tell you enough how much I appreciate the painstaking detail and thought you are putting into your efforts. It seems to me that again and again you achieve the exactly right atmosphere and angle in carrying out the story. . . . You people have a way of continually making me happy I can't thank you enough!"

The OCTOBER GAME

MITCH PUT THE SUN BACK INTO THE BUREAU DRAWER . . .

NO NOT THAT MIT. LOUISE WOULDN'T SUFFER THAT WAY SHE WOULD BE DEAD AND IT WOULD BE DYER AND SHE WOULDN'T SUFFER. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT THIS THING HAVE, ABOVE ALL, DURATION. DURATION THROUGH IMAGINATION. HOW CAN I PROLONG HER SUFFERING? NOW, FIRST OF ALL, CAN I BRING IT ABOUT? WELL...



A HORROR SUSPENSTORY
ADAPTED FROM A TALE BY
RAY BRADBURY

THE MAN STANDING BEFORE THE BEDROOM MIRROR CAREFULLY FITTED HIS CUFF LINKS TOGETHER. HE PAUSED LONG ENOUGH TO HEAR THE CHILDREN RUN BY SWIFTLY ON THE STREET BELOW, OUTSIDE THIS WARM TWO-STORY HOUSE, LIKE SO MANY GRAY NICE, THE CHILDREN. . . LIKE SO MANY LEAVES...



BY THE SOUND OF THE CHILDREN, YOU KNEW THE CALENDAR DAY. BY THEIR SCREAMS, YOU KNEW WHAT EVENING IT WAS. YOU KNEW IT WAS VERY LATE IN THE YEAR. OCTOBER. THE LAST DAY OF OCTOBER, WITH WHITE SOME MASKS AND CUT PUMPKINS AND THE SMELL OF DROPPED CANDLES...



NO. THINGS HADN'T BEEN RIGHT FOR SOME TIME. OCTOBER DIDN'T HELP ANY. IF ANYTHING, IT MADE THINGS WORSE. HE NODDED SLOWLY AT HIS IMAGE IN THE MIRROR... ADJUSTING HIS BLACK BOW-TIE...

IF, IF THIS WERE *SPRING*, THEN THERE MIGHT BE A CHANCE. BUT *TONIGHT*, ALL THE WORLD IS RUMBLING DOWN INTO *ROOM*. THERE'S NO *GREEN* OF SPRING, NONE OF THE *FRESHNESS*, NONE OF THE *PROMISE*...



BUT IT WAS *DIFFERENT* TONIGHT. THERE WAS A FEELING OF AUTUMN COMING TO LAST A *MILLION YEARS*. THERE WOULD BE *NO SPRING*. HE HAD BEEN SAYING QUIETLY ALL EVENING. IT DIDN'T SHOW ON HIS FACE. IT WAS ALL SOMEWHERE HIDDEN. BUT IT WOULDN'T STOP.

DADDY?

MARION?



AS HE FINISHED HIS BOW-TIE AND PUT ON HIS DARK COAT, MARION APPEARED IN THE DOOR. ALL SKELETONS IN HER DISGUISE...

HOW DO I LOOK,

FINE!

DADDY?



MITCH HAD NEVER LIKED OCTOBER...EVER SINCE HE FIRST LAY IN THE AUTUMN LEAVES BEFORE HIS GRANDMOTHER'S HOME MANY YEARS AGO AND HEARD THE WIND AND SAW THE DRIFTY YECES, IT HAD MADE HIM CRY WITHOUT A REASON...

SOS... SOS...



AND A LITTLE OF THAT SADNESS RETURNED EACH YEAR TO HIM. IT ALWAYS WENT AWAY WITH THE SPRING.

THERE WAS A SOFT MURKING IN THE HALL. IT WAS MARION, HIS LITTLE ONE. ALL EIGHT GHAET YEARS OF HER. NEVER A WORD. JUST HER LUMINOUS GRAY EYES AND HER WONDERING LITTLE MOUTH. MARION HAD BEEN IN AND OUT ALL EVENING, TRYING ON VARIOUS MASKS. ASKING HIM WHICH WAS MOST TERRIFYING. MOST HORRIBLE. THEY'D BOTH FINALLY DECIDED...

THE SKELETON MASK BEAM. ISN'T IT JUST IT'LL SCARE THE BEANS! AFRAID, DADDY? I LIKE IT, TOO!



FROM UNDER THE MASK, BLONDE HAIR SHOWED. FROM THE SKULL SOCKETS, SMALL BLUE EYES SMILED. MITCH SMILED. MARION...AND LOUISE...THE TWO SILENT DENIGANCERS OF HIS VITALITY, HIS DARK POWER...

COMING DOWN, DADDY?

IN A MOMENT...



WHAT **ALREADY** HAD THERE BEEN IN LOUISE THAT TOOK THE DARK OF A DARK MAN AND BLEACHED AND BLEACHED THE DARK BROWN EYES AND BLACK HAIR AND WASHED AND BLEACHED THE IN-GROWN BABY ALL DURING THE PERIOD BEFORE BIRTH UNTIL THE CHILD WAS BORN, HAIR, BLONDE, BLUE EYES, NOOY-CHEEKED...

IT'S A GIRL, MITCH. A **BLONDE**,
BLUE-EYED GIRL...

OH...



LOUISE HAD **NEVER** WANTED A CHILD. SHE'D BEEN FRIGHTENED OF THE IDEA OF BIRTH. HE'D FORGED THE CHILD ON HER. IT HAD BEEN VERY EASY FOR LOUISE TO HATE THE HUSBAND WHO SO WANTED A SON THAT HE'D GIVE HIS ONLY WIFE OVER TO A MORTUARY. WHEN MITCH HAD PUT OUT A HAND TO TOUCH, THE MOTHER HAD TURNED AWAY TO CONSIDER WITH HER NEW PINK DAUGHTER-CHILD, AWAY FROM THE DARK, FORGING HUSBANDER.

NO. DON'T TOUCH -
HER...

LOUISE.
I...



SOMETIMES HE SUSPECTED THAT LOUISE HAD CONCEIVED THE CHILD AS AN IDEA, COMPLETELY ASEXUAL, A CONCEPTION OF CONTEMPTUOUS MIND AND CELL. AS A FIRM **REBUKE** TO HIM, SHE HAD PRODUCED A CHILD IN HER OWN IMAGE. HER EYES, THAT DAY IN THE HOSPITAL, WERE GOLD. THEY'D SAID...

I HAVE A **BLONDE** DAUGHTER,
MITCH. LOOK...



AND IT HAD ALL BEEN SO BEAUTIFULLY IRONIC. HIS SELFISHNESS DESERVED IT. THE DOCTOR HAD SHAKEN HIS HEAD AND SAID...

SORRY, MR. WILGER, AND AND
YOUR WIFE WILL **NEVER** I WANTED
HAVE **ANOTHER** CHILD. "A BOY"
THIS WAS THE LAST ONE!



NOW IT WAS OCTOBER AGAIN. THERE HAD BEEN OTHER OCTOBERS. HE'D THOUGHT OF THE LONG WINTERS, YEAR AFTER YEAR, THE ENDLESS MONTHS MORTARED INTO THE HOUSE BY AN INSANE FALL OF SNOW, TRAPPED WITH A WOMAN AND CHILD, MOTHER OF WHOM LOVED HIM....



OWING THE EIGHT YEARS, THERE HAD BEEN YES-YEES. IN SPRING AND SUMMER HE GOT OUT, WALKED, WENT TO BALL GAMES; THERE WERE DESPERATE SOLUTIONS TO THE DESPERATE PROBLEM OF A HATED MAN...



OUT IN WINTER, THE HIKES AND GAMES AND ESCAPES FELL AWAY WITH THE LEAVES. LIFE, LIKE A TREE, STOOD EMPTY, THE FRUIT POOD, THE SAP RUN TO EARTH. AND NOW, THE DEATH WINTER COMING, HE KNEW THINGS WERE FINALLY AT AN END. HE SIMPLY COULD NOT WEAR THIS ONE THROUGH...



THERE WAS AN ACID BALLED OFF IN HIM THAT HAD SLOWLY EATEN THROUGH TISSUE AND TISSUE OVER THE YEARS... AND NOW, TOMORROW, IT WOULD REACH THE WILD EXPLOSIVE IN HIM AND ALL WOULD BE OVER. DOWNSTAIRS, THERE WERE SHOUTS AND HILARITY... MARION, GREETING THE FIRST ARRIVALS... LOUISE, TAKING PARENTS' COATS...



A HIGH BRISTLY SMELL OF CANDY FILLED THE BUSTLING HOUSE. LOUISE HAD LAID OUT APPLES IN NEW SKINS OF CARAMEL. THERE WERE NASTY BOWLS OF PUNCH FRESH-MIXED...



STRUNG APPLES IN EACH DOORWAY, SCOOPED, VENTED PUMPKINS FEEDING TRIANGULARLY...



...AND A WAITING TUB OF WATER IN THE CENTER OF THE LIVING ROOM, WAITING WITH A BAG OF APPLES READY FOR THE BOBBLING TO BEGIN...



MITCH WALKED TOWARD THE STAIRS. HE HESITATED...

WHY DON'T I JUST PICK A BOUTICASS AND LEAVE? NO. NOT WITHOUT BOUTING LOUISE AS MUCH AS SHE'S HURT ME. DIVORCE WOULDN'T HURT HER AT ALL. NO, I MUST MOST HER FIGURE SOME WAY TO TAKE MARION AWAY FROM HER. LEGALLY. YES. THAT'S IT. THAT WOULD MOST MOST OF ALL. TO TAKE MARION AWAY.



HE DESCENDED THE STAIRS. LOUISE DIDN'T LOOK UP. THE CHILDREN SHOUTED AND HIVED AS HE CAME DOWN.

WELL, DOWN THERE!

HI, MR. HILBERT!

HI



BY TEN O'CLOCK THE DOORBELL HAD STOPPED RINGING, THE APPLES WERE BITTEN FROM STRAINED DOGS, THE PINK CHILD FACES WERE WIPED DRY FROM APPLE BOBBLING, NAPKINS WERE SMEARED WITH CARAMEL AND PUMPKIN, AND HE, THE HUSBAND, HAD TAKEN OVER. HE TOOK THE PARTY RIGHT OUT OF LOUISE'S HANDS. HE RAN ABOUT, TALKING TO THE TWENTY CHILDREN AND THE TWELVE PARENTS, WHO WERE HAPPY WITH THE SPECIAL SPIKED CIDER HE'D FIXED THEM...

HE SUPERVISED *PIV THE FALL ON THE BOMKET...*



...SPIN THE BOTTLE.



...MUSICAL CHAIRS.



...AND ALL THE REST, MOST FITS OF SHOUTING LAUGHTER. THEN, IN THE TRIANGULAR-EYED PUMPKIN SHINE, ALL HOUSE LIGHTS OUT, HE CROD.



HURRY! FOLLOW ME!

HE TIPPED TOWARD THE CELLAR, THE PARENTS COMMENTED TO EACH OTHER, HODDING AT THE CLEVER HUSBAND, SPEAKING TO THE LUCKY WIFE...



HOW WELL HE GETS ON WITH THE CHILDREN.

YES. THE CELLAR? THE TONS OF THE WATCH?

THE CHILDREN CROWDED AFTER THE HUSBAND, SQUEALING HE MADE A BUCK SHIVER...



ABANDON HOPE... ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE.

THE PARENTS CHUCKLED...

ONE BY ONE, THE CHILDREN SLID DOWN A SLIDE, WHICH MITCH HAD FIXED UP FROM TABLE SECTIONS, INTO THE DARK CELLAR. HE HISSED AND SHOUTED SHASTLY UTTERANCES AFTER THEM. A WONDERFUL, WAILING FILLED THE DARK PUMPKIN-LIGHTED HOUSE. EVERYBODY TALKED AT ONCE. EVERYBODY BUT MARION SHE'D GONE THROUGH THE PARTY WITH A MINIMUM OF SOUND. IT WAS ALL WORK HER, ALL OF THE EXCITEMENT AND JOE...



WEEEEE...

GOLEY, IT'S DARK.

HURRY...

NOW, THE PARENTS, WITH LAUGHING RELUCTANCE THEY SLID DOWN THE INCLINE, UNWARIOUS, WHILE MARION STOOD BY, ALWAYS WANTING TO SEE IT ALL. TO BE THE LAST. LOUISE WENT DOWN WITHOUT MITCH'S HELP, MARION STOOD BY THE SLIDE WITH PICKED HER UP...



HERE WE GO

THEY SAT IN A WIDE CIRCLE IN THE CELLAR. WARMTH CAME FROM THE DISTANT BULK OF THE FURNACE. THE CHAIRS STOOD IN A LONG LINE DOWN EACH WALL, TWENTY SQUAWKING CHILDREN, TWELVE RUSTLING RELATIVES, ALTERNATELY SPAZED. THEY HAD ALL GROPED TO THEIR CHAIRS IN THE BLACKNESS, THE ENTIRE PROGRAM FROM HERE ON WAS TO BE ENACTED IN THE DARK. HE AS MR. INTRODUCER...



...NOW? OBEY?



THERE WAS A SMELL OF DAMP CEMENT AND THE SOUND OF THE WIND OUT IN THE OCTOBER STARS. EVERYBODY SETTLED. THE ROOM WAS BLACK BLACK. NOT A LIGHT, NOT A SHINE, NOT A GLINT OF AN EYE. THERE WAS A SCRAPING OF CROCKERY, A METAL RATTLE. THE HUSBAND INTONED...

THE WITCH... IS DEAD. YEE-HEE!



THE WITCH IS DEAD, SHE HAS BEEN KILLED, AND HERE IS THE KNIFE SHE WAS KILLED WITH.



HE HANDED OVER THE KNIFE. IT WAS PASSED FROM HAND TO HAND, DOWN AND AROUND THE CIRCLE, WITH CHUCKLES AND LITTLE BOO CRIES AND COMMENTS FROM THE ADULTS...

THE WITCH IS DEAD, AND THIS IS HER HEAD.



...WHISPERED THE HUSBAND, AND HANDED AN ITEM TO THE NEAREST PERSON.

SOME LITTLE CHILD CRIED HAPPILY IN THE DARK...

OH, I KNOW HOW THIS GAME IS PLAYED. HE GETS SOME OLD CHICKEN INWARDS AND HE HANDS THEM AROUND SAYING "THESE ARE HER INWARDS", AND HE MAKES A SLAP HEAD AND PASSES IT FOR HER HEAD, AND PASSES A BOOY JONGE FOR HER ARM, AND HE TAKES A MARBLE AND SAYS, "THIS IS HER EYE!" AND SOME BOOY FOR HER FEET! AND A BAG OF FLEANS JUDDING AND DIVES THAT AND SAYS, "THIS IS HER STOMACH!" I KNOW HOW THIS IS PLAYED!

WUSH, YOU'LL SPOIL EVERYTHING!



Mitch said...

THE WITCH CAME TO ARM, AND THIS IS HER ARM.

YEE-HEE...



THE ITEMS WERE PASSED AND PASSED, LIKE HOT POTATOES, AROUND THE CIRCLE. SOME CHILDREN SCREAMED, WOULDN'T TOUCH THEM. SOME RAN FROM THEIR CHAIRS TO STAND IN THE CENTER OF THE CELLAR UNTIL THE GRISLY ITEMS HAD PASSED. ONE BOY SCOFFED...

AY, IT'S ONLY CHICKEN INWARDS COME BACK, HELEN!



SHOT FROM HAND TO HAND WITH SMALL SCREAM AFTER SCREAM, THE ITEMS WENT DOWN THE LINE, DOWN, DOWN, TO BE FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER AND ANOTHER. THE HUSBAND SAID

THE MITCH IS CUT A PART
AND THIS IS HER HEART.



SIX OR SEVEN ITEMS MOVING AT ONCE THROUGH THE LAUGHING, TREMBLING DARK, LOUISE SPOKE UP...

MARION DON'T BE AFRAID, IT'S
ONLY PLAY.



MARION DIDN'T SPEAK. LOUISE
ASKED...

MARION?
ARE YOU AFRAID?

SHE'S ALL
RIGHT, SHE'S
NOT AFRAID.



...SAID THE HUSBAND. MARION
DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING...

ON AND ON THE PASSING, THE SCREAMS,
THE HILARITY, THE AUTUMN WIND
SIGHED ABOUT THE HOUSE, AND HE,
THE HUSBAND, STOOD IN THE DARK
CELLAR, INTONING THE WORDS, BANGING
OUT THE ITEMS. LOUISE'S VOICE CAME
AGAIN FROM FAR ACROSS THE CELLAR.

MARION?



EVERYBODY WAS TALKING...

MARION, ANSWER ME, ARE
YOU AFRAID?



EVERYBODY QUIETED.

MARION DIDN'T ANSWER. THE HUSBAND STOOD
THERE AT THE HEAD OF THE DARK CELLAR...
LOUISE CALLED...

MARION, ARE YOU THERE?



NO ANSWER. THE ROOM WAS SILENT...

WHERE'S MARION?

MAYBE SHE'S
UPSTAIRS?

MARION?



NO ANSWER... IT WAS QUIET...

LOUISE ONES OUT.

TURN ON THE LIGHTS!

MARION...
MARION...



THE STEPS STOPPED PASSING, THE CHILDREN AND ADULTS SAT WITH THE WITCHES STUMPS IN THEIR HANDS.

THERE WAS A SCRAPING OF A CHAIR, WILDLY, IN THE DARK, LOUISE GASPED...

NO, NO, DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHTS, DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHTS, OH GOD, GOD, GOD, DON'T TURN THEM ON, PLEASE, PLEASE DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHTS.

DON'T!



LOUISE WAS SHRIEKING NOW, THE ENTIRE CELLAR FROZE WITH THE SCREAM, NOBODY MOVED...

EVERYONE SAT SUSPENDED IN THE SILENT FROZEN TANK OF THIS OCCURRING SILENCE; THE WIND BLEW OUTSIDE BANGING THE HOUSE, THE SMELL OF PUMPKINS AND APPLES FILLED THE ROOM WITH THE SMELL OF THE OBJECTS IN THEIR FINGERS WHILE ONE BOY CHIRPED.

... AND HE RAN UPSTAIRS HOPEFULLY AND OUT AROUND THE HOUSE FOUR TIMES, AROUND THE HOUSE, CALLING.

... AND AT LAST COMING SLOWLY DOWN THE STAIRS INTO THE WAITING, BREATHING CELLAR AND SAYING TO THE DARKNESS...

I'LL GO UPSTAIRS AND LOOK!

MARION, MARION, MARION!



I CAN'T FIND HER...



THEN SOME IDIOT TURNED ON THE LIGHTS.



THE END

CAME the DAWN!

I KNEW SOMEBODY WAS IN THE LOOSE THE MINUTE I HIT THE CLEARING. I'D BEEN KERRY ALL DAY HUNTING DOWN AN ELK'S DEER AND HAD STARTED BACK EMPTY HANDED. I SAW THE FAINT WEEP OF SMOKES CURLING UPWARD FROM THE FIELDSTONE CHIMNEY AND DRIFTING OFF INTO THE GATHERING TWILIGHT. I REMEMBERED HAVING PUT OUT THE FIRE THAT MORNING. INSTINCTIVELY, I PULLED THE BOLT ON MY SARGE 30-30 AND SLID IT HOME. THEN I KICKED THE DOOR OPEN...



I NEARLY DROPPED MY RIFLE. SHE'D BEEN STANDING BEFORE THE FIREPLACE AND HAD SPUN AROUND AS I SARGED IN. SHE SHRANK BACKWARD AT THE SIGHT OF THE SUN POINTING AT HER...

I JUST STOOD THERE STARRING AT HER. SHE WAS A VISION OF LOVELINESS... THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CREATURE I'D EVER SEEN. HER BLONDE HAIR, CATCHING THE FIRELIGHT, FELL LIKE A GOLDEN WATERFALL ABOUT HER BARE SHOULDERS. SHE CLUTCHED THE BORROWED BED SHEET TIGHTLY ABOUT HER SO THAT IT ACCENTED THE SOFT FLOWING CURVES OF HER SHAPELY BODY.



BEHIND HER, A MARESHIFT CLOTHESLINE STRUNG BEFORE THE FIREPLACE HELD PINK LACY UNDERTHINGS, A PAIR OF SHEER STOCKINGS, A LIGHT BLUE BLOUSE, AND A DARK BLUE SKIRT. BELOW, A POOL OF WATER RIPPLED...

I... I WAS LOST. I FELL IN THE STREAM OUT THERE. YOUR BOOB WAS OPEN. SO...

LOST? WHAT'S A GIRL LIKE YOU DOING UP HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE?



SHE DROPPED HER EYES AND SMILED, HER SOFT LIPS PARTING, REVEALING WHITE EVEN TEETH...

I GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED. I WANDERED AROUND ALL DAY, THEN I SAW YOUR CABIN. I THOUGHT IT WAS MINE.

AND YOU DIDN'T SEE THE STREAM...



I MOVED TOWARD HER. SHE STOPPED AS IF SHE'D SUDDENLY BEEN FROZEN. I REACHED OUT AND TOUCHED HER CLOTHES...

THEY'RE STILL WET, YOU'LL CATCH A DEATH OF COLD IF YOU PUT THEM BACK ON. I'LL LEAN YOU SOMETHING TO WEAR.

TR-THANK YOU.



MY FATHER OWNS A LODGE LIKE THIS... OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. I CAME UP ALONE, FOR A REST. THIS MORNING I WANDERED AWAY AND COULDN'T FIND MY WAY BACK. I GOT PANICKY.

SO YOU STARTED RUNNING... ONLY IT WASN'T IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.



SHE SMUCK HER HEAD...

UP-OH! I GOT SOAKED TO MY SKIN. I BUILT THE FIRE AND... OH, I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND I SORROWED THIS SHEET OFF THE BED IN THERE...

LUCKY THING WITH ME HUST. AM I HERE LIKE THAT!



SHE STARTED SNATCHING HER CLOTHES OFF THE MARESHIFT LINE...

I'LL GET INTO MY PANTS. THEY MUST BE DRY...

HOLD IT A MINUTE...



I WENT INTO THE BEDROOM AND GOT A T-SHIRT AND A PAIR OF JEANS...

HERE. THESE OUGHT TO DO TILL TOMORROW.

Tomorrrrrrr?



I HOODED, POINTING OUT THE WINDOW...



SHE TOOK THE CLOTHES AND WENT INTO THE BEDROOM AND SHUT THE DOOR. I SMILED, THINKING ABOUT ALL THE BOOKS I'D READ WITH SITUATIONS LIKE THIS. IT'S NEVER BELIEVED IT COULD HAPPEN EXCEPT IN BOOKS. ALONE, WITH A BEAUTIFUL GIRL, IN A CABIN DEEP IN THE WOODS...



I WENT INTO THE KITCHEN AND LIT THE KEROSENE STOVE. THEN I STARTED OPENING SOME CANS. SHE CAME IN AFTER A WHILE...



SHE GLIDED ACROSS THE KITCHEN FLOOR, BAREFOOT EXCEPT FOR WHERE THE WAIST WRINKLED UP UNDER THE BELT, MY JEANS FIT HER NICELY. AND THE T-SHIRT... WELL... IT LOOKED AS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN RAINED ONTO HER CURVACIOUS BODY...

I SAW HER KNUCKLES WHITEN AS SHE GRIPPED THE KNIFE SHE WAS USING TO CUT THE BREAD...



WE ATE IN SILENCE. CATHY SEEMED NERVOUS. SHE STARTED AT EACH LITTLE SOUND OUTSIDE. I STUDIED HER. SHE WAS TWENTY...MAYBE TWENTY-ONE... WITH THE KIND OF FACE YOU'D SEE ON MAGAZINE COVERS. SHE SAW ME STARING AT HER AND SMILED...

HER FACE DARKENED...



SHE GOT UP FROM THE TABLE AND MOVED INTO THE LIVING ROOM. SHE LOOKED AROUND...



SHE LOOKED INTO MY EYES INVITINGLY...

MEANING ME? IT'S... IT'S PRETTY DARK OUT THERE, I DON'T THINK I'D RUN...

I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO, CATHY...



SHE PUT HER FINGERS TO MY LIPS. SHE SHOOK HER HEAD WHISPERING SOFTLY, HER CHEST RISING AND FALLING WITH EACH BREATH SHE DREW...



SHE CURLED UP ON THE COUCH BEFORE THE FIRE AND I BENT OVER AND LIT HER CIGARETTE. SHE DREW IN THE SMOKE, PURSED HER LIPS AND BLEW IT OUT INTO MY FACE IMPASSIVELY...



I STARTED TO BACK OFF... TO SIT DOWN IN THE CHAIR NEARBY. BUT SHE PATTED THE COUCH CUSHION BESIDE HER...



SHE WAS MAKING THINGS DIFFICULT FOR ME. I SLID DOWN BESIDE HER AND SHE PUT HER HEAD ON MY SHOULDER. SHE STARED INTO THE FIRE AND BEYOND IT, SMILING...



I PULLED HER TO ME AND SHE CAME ANXIOUSLY, ALMOST SHAKELLY. HER LIPS WERE WARM AND EAGER, AND SHE PRESSED AGAINST ME AS WE CLUNG TO EACH OTHER...



THAT NIGHT CATHY WAS A FURNACE OF CONSUMING PASSION AND I WAS HER STOKER, TOWARD
 BURNING THE FIRE HAD DIED TO A PILE OF BURNING
 EMBERS. THE CABIN HAD CHILLED AND CATHY
 SHIVERED AS I HELD HER IN MY ARMS...

SHE WAS ASLEEP. I WENT INTO THE BEDROOM AND GOT A
 BLANKET AND COVERED HER...



I'LL PUT ANOTHER
 LOG ON...

NO, DON'T!
 HOLD ME...

THEN I STIRRED UP THE FIRE AND
 PUT A FEW LOGS ON AND SAT DOWN
 ON THE CHAIR AND LIT MY PIPE. I
 WATCHED THE FLAMES LEAPING HUN-
 GRILY, LICKING AT THE DRY FUEL. I
 LOOKED AT CATHY... BEAUTIFUL,
 DESIRABLE CATHY...

I WAS WIDE AWAKE. MY MIND WAS
 RACING AT TOP SPEED, FILLED WITH
 A MILLION CHURNING THOUGHTS.
 CATHY...CATHY...

I FLIPPED ON THE RADIO AND
 TURNED IT TO THE LOCAL STATION,
 AND THE MUSIC CAME UP SOFTLY...
 FILLING THE ROOM...



ALL MY LIFE I'VE LOOKED
 FOR HER. ALL MY LIFE, AND
 NOW, SHE'S HERE... RESIDE
 ME... AND SHE'S MINE.



AND NOW FOR THE LATEST
 NEWS, POLICE ARE COMBING
 THE COUNTRYSIDE NORTH OF
 HERE IN SEARCH OF A...

THE NEWS ANNOUNCER'S RASPY VOICE INTERRUPTED MY
 REVERIE. I REACHED FOR THE KNOB TO TURN IT OFF...

CATHY STIRRED. I TURNED DOWN THE VOLUME.



...IN SEARCH OF A YOUNG WOMAN WHO
 ESCAPED FROM THE STATE HOSPITAL
 FOR THE ORIGINALLY INSANE
 YESTERDAY. CITIZENS ARE WARNED
 TO STAY AWAY. THIS WOMAN IS
 DANGEROUS.



SHE IS FIVE FOOT FOUR INCHES TALL, 25
 YEARS OLD, WITH NATURAL BLONDE
 HAIR. LAST SEEN BY A HUNTER IN THE
 WOODS SECTION EAST OF THE STATE
 HIGHWAY, DRESSED IN THE INSTITUTION'S
 REGULAR BLUE UNIFORM. HOWEVER,
 SHE WILL PROBABLY ATTEMPT TO HIDE
 HERSELF OF THESE TELL-TALE CLOTHES.

BLUE
 UNIFORM.
 GASP, AND
 SHE'S IN
 THIS AREA.

I STARED AT THE BLUE Pajama AND SHIRT HANGING ON THE LINE NEAR THE FIREPLACE. THE ANNOUNCER CONTINUED...



ORIGINALLY COMMITTED TO THE STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE COLD-BLOODED STABBING OF THE MAN TO WHOM SHE WAS ENGAGED, THIS WOMAN IS DEEMED CAPABLE OF KILLING AGAIN! ALL PRECAUTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN...

GOOD LORD!

MY BLOOD FREEZE IN MY VEINS. I LOOKED AT CATHY. SHE FIT THE DESCRIPTION PERFECTLY, AND SHE DID HAVE THAT BLUE OUTFIT. WAS CATHY THE MANIAC THEY WERE LOOKING FOR?



AND... AND I'VE BEEN HERE WITH HIM... ALONE WITH HIM.

BOB...?

THE RADIO HAD ANNOUNCED NEIL. I SNAPPED IT OFF. I WONDERED HOW MUCH SHE'D HEARD.



YAWNING, SHE THAT THE NEWS? DID THEY... HMMM... SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ME?

HAH? WHY, SHOULD THEY? NO ONE KNOWS YOU'RE LOST!

SHE SAT UP, SHE LOOKED AT ME SUDDENLY...

OF... COURSE... I FORGOT. HOW SILLY OF ME.

CATHY, YOUR CLOTHES ARE DIRTY. DON'T YOU WANT TO PUT THEM ON?



OH-WAH? I LIKE THESE.

C'MON! IT'S GETTING LIGHT OUT.

I STARTED FOR THE DOOR. CATHY FOLLOWED ME...



WHERE ARE WE GOING, BOB?

TO FIND YOUR CABIN, OF COURSE.

WE WERE OUTSIDE THE DOOR NOW. CATHY CAUGHT MY ARM. I COULD FEEL HER FINGERTIPS DIGGING IN...



I DON'T HAVE TO GO BACK, BOB. I CAN STAY HERE FOR A WHILE. DON'T YOU WANT ME TO? AFTER ALL, WE ARE ENGAGED NOW, AREN'T WE...?

SURE, CATHY? SURE...

IT ALL ADDED UP. THE SWEETIE SHE DIDN'T WANT TO PUT BACK ON... HER APOLOGY... HER AWAY STORY OF HER FATHER'S CABIN... HER SLEEP ABOUT THE NEWS BROADCAST... AND NOW, NOT WANTING TO LEAVE... AND US BEING ENGAGED.

CATHY WAS THE ESCAPED MAMBA THE POLICE WERE LOOKING FOR? AND...SHE WAS CAPABLE OF KILLING AGAIN? I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO...



I SLAMMED THE DOOR AND LOCKED IT. CATHY STOOD OUTSIDE, DUMB-FOLLORED...



SHE STARTED TO CRY...



I SAT DOWN IN A CHAIR FACING THE DOOR WITH MY 30-30 ACROSS MY LAP. SUDDENLY CATHY BEGAN TO POUND ON THE DOOR... FURIOUSLY... SHOUTING...



THEN... SILENCE... OUTSIDE, I COULD HEAR HER MOVING AROUND. I WASN'T FALLING FOR ANYTHING I WANTED. AFTER A WHILE, A SICKLY FINGER OF RED REACHED IN UNDER THE DOOR AND POOLED OUT OVER THE FLOOR.



AND THEN CATHY SCREAMED. IT WAS AN EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK THAT MADE ME SHIVER...



I LEAPED TO THE DOOR AND FLUNG IT OPEN. I STARED DOWN AT CATHY'S MIADE WHERE BODY WITH THE KNIFE STICKING OUT OF HER NECK AND THE COARSE BLUE UNIFORM FLUNG CARELESSLY OVER HER WITH THE STERILED LETTERS: 'STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE'.



AT THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING, A FIGURE WITH BLONDE HAIR, DRESSED IN MY BLUE JEANS AND T-SHIRT, WAS JUST DISAPPEARING INTO THE THICK WOODS... THE END

**WE AT E.C. ARE PROUDEST
OF OUR SCIENCE - FICTION
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**LOOK FOR
THESE SEALS
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TWO-FISTED TALES - FRONTLINE COMBAT

MAD

**WEIRD SCIENCE - WEIRD FANTASY
AND THE 25¢ ANNUAL ANTHOLOGIES:**

WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY

TWO-FISTED ANNUAL - TALES OF TERROR

SURGERY!



Bar Packer snuffed deeply at the ether-soaked sponge, and felt the shabby room melting in front of him. His eyes blinked open and he managed to focus on the doctor for a second. Everything was going to be okay, the saw-bones was all set to go to work with his scalpel, and Danny was tight behind him with a gun jammed in the doc's back. Danny was a good kid . . . he'd make sure this unlicensed quack did what he had been told. And the liquor the old doctor had sopped up wouldn't do any harm, either . . . Steadied his nerves . . . strengthened the hand that was going to amputate Bar's gangrenous leg!

It had been only two hours ago that Bar — half-delirious when they carried him into the little rural hospital — heard the hick Police Surgeon mutter: "The whole leg's become one big festering wound! Gangrene's set in around those slugs already . . . if we don't amputate at the hip, the prisoner's a goner before nightfall! Only way we can save his worthless life is to cut off his right leg!"

The Constables, who had captured Bar after a furious gun-fight, went into a nervous discussion of what to do with the biggest catch of their lives; Bar, thrashing from side to side with delirium, had become aware suddenly of a shadow flitting surreptitiously into the hospital room. Even through the wave of pain which engulfed him in spasms, Bar realized that Danny — who had somehow eluded the cops during the ambush in which Bar had been so seriously wounded — had succeeded in sneaking back to help his boss. As Bar

propped himself on one elbow, he heard Danny's husky voice creating a stir in the hospital room. "Just stay where you are, coppers!" Danny was saying, his gun leveled ominously. "One twitch and I empty this roscoe into the nearest belly!"

Bar must have fainted then, for he remembered nothing until the agony of jouncing along a dirt road awakened him. Danny was at the wheel, peering intently at the rutted road. "W-Where . . . am . . . I . . . ?" Bar whispered, a shudder of pain pulsing through his swollen right leg. "T-The hick hospital . . . ?"

"Miles behind us," Danny said. "We're on our way to that old sawbones who uses work for the mob. That amputation I heard 'em talking about . . . Doc Spender, with some hooch under his belt, can do it in *his* place!"

Bar had passed out again, and when he came to he was stretched out on a table in the old doc's living room. Even through the ether that was making him drowsy, he knew that Danny had gotten the doc drunk enough to perform the amputation. In a few more minutes Bar would have no right leg . . . but it was better than rotting of gangrene . . .

They were in the car again, but this time Danny was alone in the front, with Bar bundled up on the rear seat.

"Went off fine," Danny said, intcar on the road yawning in front of them. "Funny how Spender can perform surgery only when he's plastered! That leg came off neat as you'd want it!"

"A-All over, eh?" Bar whispered. "I guess it coulda been worse. That leg *had* to go before it killed me. And I still have *one* pin left . . ."

Almost without realizing it, Bar reached out to pat his left leg reassuringly.

"G-Good Lord!" he screeched aloud. "T-That drunken idiot . . . h-he amputated m-my **LEFT LEG!**"



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SHOCK TALK

Dear Editors,

I would like to thank the hand of Ray Bradbury for his masterpiece, "The Small Assassin" (ES, No. 7). It was great. Superbly written. The best E.C. story I've ever read!

J. R. DiCenzo
Brooklyn, N. Y.

... I've just finished reading the latest E.C. Bradbury adaptation, and all I can say is it's TOPS. I certainly am glad E.C. has the honor of adapting Bradbury's stories instead of one of the companies that put out those wretched imitations of your magazine. They would have wrecked his stuff!

Ernie Colton
Chicago, Ill.

... As for Ray Bradbury, I wish you'd keep his stories coming forever.

Robert Ott
Port Jervis, N. Y.

... I hope you will have many more of Mr. Bradbury's stories in your magazine.

William Emerald
Beverly, Mass.

... I was certainly pleased to find that you have put Ray Bradbury's stories in your E.C. magazine. I don't think you could have chosen a better author. Probably his best, and best known, horror story, is "The October Game." Could you possibly adapt it in the near future?

Donna Albrecht
Muncie, Ind.

... My God, what's Ray Bradbury got against children? He must have been a mean child. He writes of it children are the downfall of the world. First, it was "Lily May Poison," in Vault of Horror No. 29, and then it was "The Small Assassin," in Shock Suspense No. 7...

Dick Archer
(no address given)

Well, Don, by now you've seen our adaptation of "The October Game," and let us assure you that we not only agree it's the best horror story we've ever read... we think it's the best horror story we've ever read... but none! As for you, Dick, we trust "The October Game" has made you happy!!!!—editors

Reader Dick Archer's letter goes on to ask:

... What is the cover of Shock Suspense No. 7 supposed to mean? A man burning up, while another man is outside in a storm?

And there were many others, such as:

... I was pleased as punch to see a Foldrite cover on Shock Suspense again. Al has't done one

since Shock Suspense No. 1, but hell it was, at least for Foldrite, a masterpiece. But I don't understand what was going on!

Herbie Volchok
N. Y. C.

... and the idea for the cover was terrific, having a close-up of a guy being hit by lightning with a flash of his reflection in a window. But what story did it come from?

Frank Evans
Lynchburg, Va.

Get it, Herbie? As for the subject matter coming from a story in the book, I mean, we usually attempt to do this. However, as you may recall, for Shock No. 1, we tried to give you what we considered the most "shocking" cover we could think of... that of someone being executed in an electric chair! Shock No. 7 being our first anniversary issue, we attempted once again, so conceive of an even more "shocking" cover... and came up with this discussion in question, someone being struck by lightning!—ed.

Dear Editors,

I wish to take this opportunity to say that your request (i.e. the appeal we made for your support during these trying times of overcrowding and poor sales)—ed.) in ES, No. 7 was really appreciated. After reading just one of your magazines, I became a regular purchaser of every one you put out. I don't see how any one could fail today all of your magazines after reading just one. I can say that I, along with many, many other of your readers, will do my best to continue giving you my loyal support.

Conrad Brand
(no address given)

... All I can say is E.C. will be publishing magazines in the 21st century. People traveling between the planets will sit back and enjoy E.C.'s. People'll be going back on time-machines to get back again. In fact, by the year 2000, E.C.'s will be the only comic accepted by the time-traveling public. No more war... people will be reading E.C.'s for excitement. And as for YOU thanking US for buying your magz, BAH, HUMBUG, we should thank YOU for PUBLISHING them.

John Zarach
Sandusky, Ohio

Conrad!—ed.

Before closing, let's reminder that subscriptions to Shock or any other E.C. mag. will cost you The cash, coin of the realm, for a full year's supply... six issues... manual envelope! Address for your comments, suggestions, mail, subscription orders, or checks towards it:

The Editors
Shock Suspense
Room 706, Dept. 9
315 Lafayette St.
N. Y. C. 12, N. Y.

The MEDDLERS!

WHEN HE CAME DOWNTOWN ON THOSE BARE VISITS TO PICK UP PROVISIONS OR THE PACKAGES OF CHEMICALS AND EQUIPMENT THAT WAITED FOR HIM AT THE LOCAL POST OFFICE, IT WAS AS THOUGH THE PEOPLE ON THE STREETS HAD SUDDENLY BEEN STRICKEN DEAF. IT SEEMED LIKE INVISIBLE HANDS HAD BEEN CLAPPED OVER THEIR MOUTHS, SMOTHERING THEIR WORDS IN THEIR THROATS, CUTTING OFF THEIR CONVERSATIONS. HE WOULD WALK PAST THEIR STARES, THROUGH THEIR SILENT DISTRUST AND HATE, AND FINISH HIS BUSINESS QUICKLY AND LEAVE. THEY HAD NO USE FOR HIM IN THE TOWN. THEY DESPISED HIS MEDDLING IN THINGS THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND...



DOCTOR CONRAD RIVERS HAD COME TO THE QUIET TOWN OF MILLVILLE TWO YEARS BEFORE. HE'D ARRIVED IN A STATION WAGON FILLED WITH CHEMICALS AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT AND LABORATORY APPARATUS. AND HE'D STOOD ON THE DUSTY SIDEWALK AMID THE HOSTILE STARES, THE SILENT RESENTMENT AT A STRANGER, AND HE'D ~~stayed~~

HE'D FELT THEIR AMBIGUITY TOWARD HIM ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. BUT HE'D SMILED, DETERMINED TO WIN THEIR FRIENDSHIP AND RESPECT...

DOES ANYONE KNOW WHERE I CAN GET A SMALL MOUSE? I'D LIKE TO CARRY ONE OF MY BROTHERS HERE IN MILLVILLE.

WHAT KIND OF WORK, STRANGER?

SCIENTIFIC WORK, MY FRIEND. I AM A RESEARCH CHEMIST. THE SAND QUARRY NORTH OF TOWN CONTAINS COMPOUNDS I NEED IN MY EXPERIMENTS.

I DON'T WANT NOBODY AROUND HERE WHO MIGHT BLOW UP THE PLACE, STRANGER.



A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSORY

I ASSURE YOU, I WILL NOT BLOW UP MILL-VILLE, GENTLEMEN. I AM NOT ENGAGED IN ANY KIND OF EXPERIMENTS OF THAT NATURE. MY WORK DEALS WITH THE ORGANS...

ORGANS? WHAT'S THAT?

IN SIMPLE TERMS, MY FRIENDS, I AM ATTEMPTING TO CREATE LIFE IN A TEST TUBE.

CREATE LIFE?

YOU MEAN LIKE FRANK FOSTER?

NOT AT ALL. I AM TRYING TO CREATE LIVING PHOTO-PLASM CHEMICALLY. PHOTO-PLASM IS THE LIVING MATERIAL OF WHICH ALL LIFE IS BASICALLY CON-STRUCTED... FROM THE SINGLE-CELLED AMOEBAS, TO MAN, WITH HIS BILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF CELLS.

NOW, SCIENCE KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT THE CHEMICAL MAKEUP OF PHOTO-PLASM IS. IT KNOWS EACH ELE-MENT AND ITS EXACT PROPOR-TION. YET, WHEN THESE ELEMENTS ARE COMBINED, THE RESULTANT DOES NOT LIVE.

MAYBE IT AIN'T SUPPOSED TO, STRANGER. MAYBE IT AIN'T YOUR BUSINESS TO BE ABLE TO MAKE A BUNCH OF CHEMICALS LIVE!

WELL, I...

WE DON'T WANT PEOPLE IN THIS TOWN WHO NOSE AROUND WITH WHAT AIN'T THEIR BUS-INESS, STRANGER.

YOU BETTER BONE ALONG, STRANGER. TAKE YOUR CHEMICALS AND JUNK AND FIND SOME OTHER PLACE TO LIVE.

BUT DESPITE THE TOWNFOLK'S DISAPPROVAL OF HIM, DOCTOR SEVENS HAD FOUND AN OLD HOUSE AND MOVED IN TO MILLVILLE. HE'D SHUNNED OFF THEIR HOSTILITY, KEPT TO HIMSELF, AND PLUNGED INTO HIS WORK. AND EACH TIME HE'D LEFT THE SILENT TRANGULARITY OF HIS LABORATORY AND SOME DOWNTOWN, HE'D FELT THEIR STOWING RATHER...

GOOD MORNINGS, MR. SEVENS. I'D LIKE HALF A POUND OF BACON.

NO BACON.

BUT THERE'S A POUND THERE, IN THE SARDINE CASE...

THAT'S SOLD. THE WOOD JONES CALLED UP THIS MORNING. NO BACON.

AT FIRST IT WAS LITTLE THINGS THAT THE DOCTOR OVERLOOKED. BUT AS THE WEEKS AND MONTHS CRAWLED BY, THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE RESENTMENT TOWARD HIM BECAME MORE APPARENT....



BUT DOCTOR RIVERS IGNORED THEIR ABANDONING HIM. CONTINUALLY CONTINUED ON WITH HIS WORK...



BUT THE DOCTOR HAD FELT NO MALICE TOWARD HIS PERSECUTERS. HE'D GONE INTO TOWN AND...



A CAMPAIGN OF SILENCE HAD BEGUN. RARELY A WORD WAS SPOKEN TO THE DOCTOR. THE FURCH-BITTERS AND OLD THINGS THAT HUNG AROUND THE STORES IN TOWN CLAMMED UP WHEN HE APPROACHED. BUT THE CHILDREN VOICED THEIR ELDER'S BITTERNESS.



ONE DAY, A ROCK WAS PITCHED THROUGH HIS LABORATORY WINDOW, SMASHING A BEAKER OF SOLUTION. HE'D LABORED SO LONG TO PRODUCE...



HE'D LOOKED DOWN AT THE OPENINGS OF HIS BODILY CHEMICALS, AND HE'D SHAKEN HIS HEAD....



THE WINDOW REMAINED UNREPAIRED.



AND ALONG WITH THE ABUSE HE SUFFERED CAME REPEATED FAILURE AFTER FAILURE. THE EXPERIMENTAL SOLUTIONS THE DOCTOR PREPARED SHOWED NO SIGNS OF LIFE. BEAKER AFTER BEAKER OF DISCARDED FORMULAS LINED HIS SHelves...



LOOKS LIKE THIS ONE'S WRONG, TOO! ANOTHER FAILURE...

AND ALONG WITH THE DOCTOR'S BURNING DESIRE FOR THE SUCCESS OF HIS EXPERIMENTS CAME THE TOWNFOLK'S MOUNTING ANGER AND FRUSTRATION AT THEIR FAILURE TO MAKE HIM LEAVE...



I SAY LET'S **ASH** HIM OUT! HE OUGHT TO BE **TARRIED** AND **FEATHERED!**

UNTIL, ONE NIGHT...



G'WON! LET'S **TEACH** HIM A **LESSON!** LET'S **SHOW** HIM HE **AIN'T** **WANTED!** LET'S **SHOW** HIM **GOOD!** LET'S **SHOW** HIM **GO!**

BUT HE WOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED. EACH FAILURE BROUGHT REDOUBLED EFFORT...EACH ABUSE, INCREASED DETERMINATION...



THAT **SPARK** OF **LIFE**...THAT **INTANGIBLE** **SOMETHING** THAT WILL **BIND** THESE **ELEMENTS** INTO **COMBINING**, AND **LIVING**, AND **GROWING**. WHAT IS IT? WHERE CAN I **FIND** IT...?

THEY MOVED THROUGH THE DARKENED STREETS...PICKING UP MORE AND MORE AS THEY MOVED ALONG...



WHERE'S **DOCK**? **SONA** RUN THE **DOC** OUT OF **TOWN!**

...UNTIL AN ANGRY HOSTILE CROWD, SHOUTING AND CURSING AND FLINGING INVOCATIVES, STORMED THE OLD HOUSE...



BUST THE **DOOR** **DOWN!** HE **WON'T** **OPEN** UP! ONE...TWO...THREE...

DOCTOR RIVERS STOOD IN HIS LABORATORY...DEFIANT...CALM. THEY CROWDED IN, HIS VOICE WAS CONTROLLED, WITH NO TRACE OF FEAR...



WHAT YOU ARE **DOING** IS **WRONG**. YOU ARE **BREAKING** THE **LAW**. YOU HAVE NO **RIGHT** TO... **GET** HIM...

THE HELPLESS DOCTOR WAS LIFTED SOBBLY BY STRONG HANDS AND CARRIED FROM THE LABORATORY. OTHER ANGRY FISTS SMASHED TEST TUBES AND BOTTLES AND APPARATUS.



SUDDENLY THE STRUGGLING DOCTOR STIFFENED AND SCREAMED IN PAIN, CLUTCHING HIS CHEST.



INSIDE THE OLD HOUSE, THERE WAS SILENCE. THE LABORATORY LAY IN RUINS...



THE BOOKS THAT LINED THE SHELVES WERE DUMPED AND SMASHED INTO THE SINK...



THEY LAID HIM ON THE DRY-MOISTENED SPASS AND STOOD AROUND HIM, GASPING AND CATCHING THEIR BREATH. AND THEY WATCHED HIS EYES GLAZE AND LIFE LEAVE HIS BODY. THEY STARED, STUNNED AT THE STRAG...



AND IN THE SINK, THE COUNTLESS FAILURES, THE UNSUCCESSFUL SOLUTIONS, A LIFE'S WORK, SHRIMPED AND TWISTED AND RAN SLEETLY DOWN THE DRAIN...



...DOWN INTO DARKNESS AND DAMPNESS, THROUGH FOUL-SMELLING PIPES AND RUSTED CONDUITS, INTO THE SEWERAGE SYSTEM OF THE TOWN...



AND THERE, IN THE DARKNESS AND THE FILTH, AMID THE WASTES OF MEN AND THE SWILL AND SLUSH OF THE TOWN, THE SOLUTIONS SWIRLED AND EDDIED AND COMBINED... AND LIVED.



AND WHEN THE LEAVINGS AND THE WASTAGE OF THE PEOPLE ABOVE NO LONGER SATIATED THE GROWING SACKING THING, IT SOUGHT OUT THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES.



ENZO SCOOPED HANDFULS OF WATER FROM THE BASIN AND BASHED THEM ON HIS FACE, CHASING THE SLEEP FROM HIS EYES. HE NEVER NOTICED THE RUBBER STOPPER LIFT AND THE GOZE FILL THE BASIN...



OUT OF THE MUCK AND POLLUTION, IT DREW ITS LIFE. IT FED UPON THE EXCREMENTS AND SLUDGE AND SPESH OF THE COMMUNITY ABOVE. AND IT GREW. IT GREW LARGER. THE REFUSE NURTURED IT.



JED HAD BEEN TAKING A SHOWER. HE NEVER NOTICED THE SICKLY SLUR COZE UP FROM THE DRAIN.



MARTHA STARED IN HORROR AS JED CRASHED HIMSELF FROM THE BATH-ROOM. ONLY STUMPS REMAINED WHERE HAD ONCE BEEN HEALTHY LEGS...



WHEN HE LOOKED AT HIS HANDS, THEY WERE STRIPPED OF THEIR FLESH. WHEN HE LOOKED AT HIS FACE, HE SAW THE PERSONIFICATION OF DEATH...



CARRION DEATH!

MY LIPS ARE PARCHED AND SWOLLEN AND CRACKED. MY TONGUE IS DRY AND SEARCHES MY MOUTH FOR MOISTURE, BUT FINDS NONE. I LIE ON THE BURNING HOT SAND, STARING UP AT THE CLUDELESS SKY, THE GLARING SUN BAKES DOWN, AND MY EYES SMART BUT THEY DO NOT TEAR, FOR I HAVE HAD NO WATER FOR FOUR DAYS. I LIE ON THE STEAMING DESERT BADLANDS AND I WATCH THE BUEZZARDS CIRCLING LAZILY SCREAMING AND SCARING, SWOOPING HUMORILY, AND I WAIT...

CROW, YOU LOUSY VULTURED! CROW DOWN HERE AND FEAST! CROW DOWN HERE AND SET ME FREE!



I TRY TO REMEMBER HOW IT ALL BEGAN. HOW I CAME TO BE LYING HERE, IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, WAITING FOR THE CARRION BIRDS TO DROP DOWN AND SINK THEIR RAZOR SHARP TALONS INTO FLESH AND TEAR AND RIP AND FREE ME FROM THE ARMS OF DEATH, I SEE IT NOW THE RIBBON OF CONCRETE STRETCHES ACROSS THE DESERT, SWEEPING SWIFTH MY SPEEDING CARWHEELS...

HE'S SAWING ON ME! I'LL NEVER MAKE IT!



BESIDE ME, ON THE CAR SEAT, THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS RESTED IN A BLACK SATCHEL. THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR WHICH I'D HOLD UP A BANK AND MURDERED A GUARD. AHEAD, EAST LIVING AND WOMEN AND FANCY CLOTHES WAITED, SMILING, BECKONING. BUT RIGHT BEHIND ME, CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN US, HO BIRCH WALLING, CAMP THE STATE TROOPER...

YOU'LL NEVER GET ME, COPPER. I'LL KILL YOU FIRST!



I PRESSED THE ACCELERATOR TO THE FLOOR BOARD, URGING MY CAR AHEAD. I COULD SEE THE TROOPER IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR, PLUNGING AFTER ME, TAKING CARE-FUL AIM...

JUST A LITTLE CLOSER, COPPER! JUST A LITTLE...



AND THEN I SLAMMED MY FOOT ON THE BRAKES. THE TIRES SCREELED ALONG THE CONCRETE, MARKING A DOUBLE BLACK LINE OF BURNED RUBBER. I WAITED FOR THE IMPACT OF THE TROOPER AND HIS MOTOR-CYCLE WASHING INTO THE REAR OF MY CAR...



BUT THE SOUND OF METAL CRASHING AGAINST METAL AND THE DULL THUD OF FLESH AND BONE SPLASHING AGAINST STEEL NEVER CAME. MY CAR SWERVED, SKIDDING ONTO THE BRWEL SHOULDER OF THE ROAD, AND EVERYTHING STARTED WHIRLING CRAZILY AS IT SPIN OVER...



I FELT MYSELF LEAVE THE SEAT, THROWN FORWARD, THE STEERING WHEEL CRUSHING AGAINST MY CHEST. THEN I WAS FLYING UPWARD, MY HEAD STRIKING THE CAR ROOF. AS THE BLACKNESS CLOSED IN, I COULD HEAR THE CHATTERING OF GLASS AND THE ROAR OF THE TROOPER'S BIKE AS IT RUST PART...



THAT WAS ALL. I SLIPPED INTO A WORLD OF DARKNESS AND HEAT, AND WHEN I OPENED MY EYES, THE CAR WAS A MASS OF FLAMES AND I WAS OUTSIDE, LYING BESIDE THE MOTORCYCLE. THE TROOPER WAS SPEAKING TO SOMEONE...

YEAH, I GOT HIM. HE'S OUT COLD. WRAPPED UP HIS GEAR BUT I PULLED HIM OUT BEFORE IT CAUGHT FIRE.



HE WAS KNEELING BESIDE ME, MIKE IN HAND. I FELT A COLD RING OF STEEL AROUND MY WRIST, I WAS HARPOONED TO THE TROOPER, AND HE WAS REPORTING IN ON HIS TWO-WAY RADIO...

COME ON OUT AND GET US. I'LL WAIT HERE FOR YOU, THAT'S RIGHT SIXTEEN MILES SOUTH ON ROUTE 803...



I WAS CAUGHT. TERROR CLAWED AT MY BATING HEART. THE TROOPER WASN'T LOOKING AT ME. HE STILL THOUGHT I WAS OUT COLD, IT WAS MY ONLY CHANCE...

I RECOGNIZED HIS CAR BY THE DESCRIPTION. THE MONEY'S BEEN BURNED YEAH. OKAY... SEE YOU IN A FEW MINUTES. OH, BY THE WAY, BRING THE MASTER OFF-KEY! I HAVEN'T GOT MINE.



I YANKED HARD AND HE LOST HIS BALANCE. HE TOPPLED OVER ME AND MY FREE HAND POUNDED HIS BECK. HIS CRY OF SURPRISE UNWOUND IN HIS THROAT AS MY FINGERS CLOSED AROUND IT...

MEET! G-D-D-N-N-UM-UM-UM-UM...



I ROLLED OVER ON TOP OF HIM, STRADDLING HIM. HIS FREE HAND WENT FOR HIS GUN AND I KICKED. IT CLATTERED ACROSS THE CONCRETE ONTO THE GRAVEL SHOULDER. HIS EYES BULGED AND HIS FACE TURNED RED, THEN PURPLE, AND I HELD ON...



AND THEN HIS BODY WENT LIMP AND I KNEW I'D STRANGLERD HIM. I STARTED DIGGING THROUGH HIS POCKETS, LOOKING FOR THE KEY TO THE HANDCUFFS.

NO KEY? I GUESS I GOT A LITTLE Hysterical... I RIPPED AT HIS CLOTHES, CURSING. I DRAGGED HIM TO THE MOTORCYCLE AND STARTED TO RIFLE THROUGH THE SIDE-POCKETS WHEN I REMEMBERED WHAT HE'D SAID...

I WAS HANDCUFFED TO A CORPSE. AND IN A FEW MOMENTS, MORE COPS WOULD BE THERE. I LOOKED AROUND WILDLY, FAR DOWN THE LONG AND STRAIGHT ROAD, A SMALL SPOCK APPEARED ON THE HORIZON.

WHERE IS IT, BLAST YOU?
WHERE'S THE KEY?



OH!OT THE WAG. BRING THE MASTER CUFF-KEY! I HAVEN'T GOT MINE.



GOOD
LAD!

I'VE GOT TO GET
OUT OF HERE.



I PICKED UP THE DEAD TROOPER AND THREW HIM ACROSS MY SHOULDERS. TO TRY TO USE THE MOTORCYCLE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION. BY ONE CHANCE LAY IN MARIANA FOR THE BAD LANDS... I STARTED TO RUN...

I KEPT RUNNING UNTIL MY HEART FELT LIKE SOME-ONE WAS TRYING TO POUND THEM WAY OUT OF MY CHEST... MY THROAT FELT LIKE A STEEL BAND WAS WRAPPED AROUND IT. AND MY LEGS FELT LIKE BUTTER...

GET TO MAKE THE HOOKS
BEFORE THEY GET THERE AND
SEE WHAT HAPPENED!



I KEPT GOING. THE BODY I CARRIED FELT AS THOUGH IT WEIGHED FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS. MY LEGS WERE NUMB. MY CLOTHES WERE SOAKED IN PERSPIRATION. FINALLY I REACHED THE HUGGED ROCKY SECTION I'D HEADED FOR...

GASP...GASP...GASP...I GOT A KNIFE IN MY POCKET. IT'S THE GOLF KNIFE. I GOT TO...GET...GASP...FREE OF HIM...



I LAY BEHIND A ROCK BESIDE THE THROOPER'S BODY, TUCKING IN THE HOT DESERT AIR AND SEARCHING MY POCKETS FOR MY KNIFE. BUT MY POCKETS WERE...

EMPTY! THE DIRTY @#\$%^!! HE MUST HAVE CLEARED ME OUT WHILE I WAS UNCONSCIOUS!



AND THEN, FOR BARE ACROSS THE BURNING SAND, BACK AT THE ROAD, I COULD HEAR THE CAR SCREAMING TO A STOP.

THEY'LL GET ME FOR SURE. I HAVEN'T GOT ENOUGH OF A LEAD!



I COULD SEE THEM GETTING OUT OF THEIR CAR, LOOKING AROUND AT THE SHROODLING WOODS, THE PARKED CAR.

THEY'RE NOT STATE THROOPERS. ONE OF THEM'S A WOMAN...



IT WAS THE BREAK I NEEDED, I'D ENOUGH MY BREATH, SO I HOISTED THE BODY TO MY SHOULDERS AGAIN AND STARTED OFF.



DARKNESS CAME FAST IN THE BADLANDS. THE SHADOWS FROM THE MOUNTAINS DROPT TO THE WEST DROPT DOWN ON YOU LIKE A GRAY BLANKET, AND THE STARS ARE SUDDENLY TWINKLING OVERHEAD. I DIDN'T SLEEP THAT FIRST NIGHT. I KEPT GOING, CARRYING THAT CORPSE, STUMBLING IN THE BLACKNESS, GETTING UP, AND MOVING ON.

FINALLY, TOWARDS MORNING, I COLLAPSED FROM EXHAUSTION. I LAY BESIDE THE CORPSE, LICKING MY LIPS AND TASTING THE SALTY SWEAT, AND SUDDENLY I WANTED A DRINK. I WANTED A DRINK IN THE WORST WAY AND I KNEW IF I DIDN'T DO SOMETHING FAST, I'D DIE OF THIRST OUT THERE.

THEY'LL NEVER TRACK ME NOW THIS IS REAL ROCKY COUNTRY AND THEY CAN'T USE BLOODHOUNDS THEY HAVE NOTHING TO GIVE THE HOUNDS TO SMELL MY CAR BURNED.



I'VE GOT TO GET FREE OF THIS BLASTED BODY SOMEHOW...



THE SUN CAME UP IN ALL ITS BLAZING FURY AND BAZED DOWN ON THE ROCKS AND THE SAND. I PULLED AND TUGGED, TRYING TO WRENCH THE CURPS FROM THE CORPSE, NOW GROWING RIGID WITH RUSTY MORTIS...



AND THEN HIS GLEAMING BADGE CAUGHT THE SUN'S REFLECTION AND SENT IT STREAMING INTO MY EYES. I COULDN'T RESIST IT FROM HIS UNIFORM...



ONCE, WHEN I WAS A KID, I WENT DOWN TO THE STOCKYARDS... TO A SLAUGHTER HOUSE... AND WATCHED THEM SLAUGHTER A LAMB AND SKIN IT. IT MADE ME SICK. AS THE SHARPENED BADGE SLIT THE WHITE FLESH, REVEALING THE RED, SLIMY MUSCLES AND TENDONS, I GOT SICK AGAIN, JUST LIKE THAT TIME SO LONG AGO...



THE BADGE DROPPED FROM MY HAND, CLATTERED TO THE ROCKY GROUND, AND SKIPPED DOWN INTO A CREVICE. WHEN I WAS FINISHED EMPTYING MY GUTS OF THE LAST DROP OF LIQUID LEFT IN THEM, I REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED...



AND THEN THEY WERE OVERHEAD... THE BUZZARDS. THEY SOARED AND CIRCLED, SCISSORING THEIR WINGS. THEIR HUNGRY SCREAMS ECHOED FROM ROCK TO ROCK, SUMMONING MORE...



I STARTED TO RUN... BRASSING THE BODY... FALLING... GETTING UP, BUT THEY STAYED ABOVE ME, CIRCLING, CIRCLING, THEIR SCREECHES LAUGHING AT ME...



I KEPT GOING UNTIL I COULDN'T GO ON ANY FURTHER... MY KNEES BLEED WHERE THE HANDGUILTS HAD TORN THE FLESH. MY LIPS WERE DRY. EVERYTHING STARTED SPINNING. I SLIPPED TO THE GROUND, AND AS THE BLACKNESS CLOSED IN, THE SCREAMS SEEMED TO COME OUT OF THE HOT AIR DOWN TOWARD ME...



WHEN I CAME TO, I WAS SHIVERING FROM THE COLD. IT WAS NIGHT AGAIN. BESIDE ME, THE CORPSE LAY BLOD, AND BLACK SHADOWS CROOKED UPON IT. I SCREAMED...



THE BUZZARDS TOOK UP THE CHORUS, THEIR WINGS BEATING UP INTO THE BLACKNESS. THEY CIRCLED ABOVE ME, FRIGHTENED OFF BY MY CRY...



I RETCHED BUT THERE WAS NOTHING IN ME TO NERVE. I LAY BACK, SHIVERING AND PERSPICING, LISTENING TO THE SCREAMS AND THE FLAPPING OF BIRD WINGS...



THE NIGHT CRAWLED BY AND DAWN CAME, AND ONCE MORE THE SUN LEAPED INTO THE CLOUDLESS SKY AND BURNED DOWN UPON ME, AND THE STENCH OF THE PARTIALLY EATEN BODY I WAS HANDICAPPED TO SEARCH MY DUST-FILLED DRY NOSTRILS...



I LIFTED THE PARTIALLY EATEN BODY AND STAGGERED ON... SEARCHING... LISTENING. BUT THE ONLY SOUNDS I HEARD WERE THE CRIES OF THE CAUTION BIRDS OVERHEAD. BY NIGHTFALL, MY LIPS WERE CRACKED AND MY TONGUE WAS SWOLLEN AND I RESPONDED NO LONGER...



I WAS WEAK AND DIZZY AND I HAD TO FIGHT TO KEEP AWAKE... TO KEEP THOSE HORRIBLE CREATURES AWAY. AND THEN I THOUGHT OF MY OWN CHANCE... MY ONE DESPERATE CHANCE TO SAVE MYSELF...



AND AS DAWN OF THE FOURTH DAY BROKE, I LAY ON THE HOT BURNING SAND STARING UP AT THE CLOUDLESS SKY WATCHING THE BUZZARDS CIRCLING LAZILY, SCREAMING AND ROARING, SWOOPING HUMBLY, AND I WAITED...



THE BLARING SUN BARES DOWN, AND MY EYES SMART BUT THEY DO NOT TEAR, FOR I HAVE HAD NO WATER FOR FOUR DAYS. I WAIT, I WAIT AND I WATCH. AND THEN, ONE OF THEM DROPS TOWARD ME...



I DO NOT MOVE. I DO NOT DARE. I DO NOT WANT TO SCARE THEM OFF AGAIN. I CLOSE MY EYES, LISTENING TO THE BEATING OF WINGS AS THE OTHERS COME DOWN...



I LISTEN TO THEM TEARING AND SCREEALING AND FIGHTING AMONG THEMSELVES AS THEY GO FOR UPON THE DEAD FLESH...



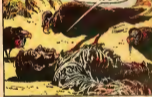
AND I WAIT. I WAIT AND LISTEN TO THE TEARING AND PULLING AND SCREECHING AND SOFT MUNCHING. AND THEN I LOOK...

OH, MY LORD!



THE CORPSE BESIDE ME IS PRACTICALLY STRIPPED CLEAN. BUT I FEEL NO NAUSEA. I FEEL NO REVULSION. NOT EVEN WHEN I SEE THE HULKING SMOOTH ON MY OWN CHEST, TEARING AND RIPPING AND SQUEALING...

NO! NO!



AND I FEEL NO PAIN AS THE VICE-LIKE JAWS OF THE HAW-NECKED VULTURES CLOSE UPON MY FLESH AND FEEL IT FROM MY BONES. I CANNOT MOVE... I CANNOT STOP THEM.



I CAN ONLY WATCH IN BLIND HORROR AS THEY FEED UPON ME. I CAN WATCH ONLY UNTIL ONE OF THEM FLICKS MY EYEBALLS FROM MY SKULL...



FOR I AM DEAD...

THE END

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